



# News Release

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

**437<sup>th</sup> AIRLIFT WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**  
102 East Hill Blvd., Rm. 223, Charleston AFB, S.C. 29404-5154  
Phone: (843) 963-5608, 5537 or 5589; Fax (843) 963-5604

**PAO email:** linda.pepin@charleston.af.mil  
After duty hours, call command post at (843) 963-2531, and ask for the PA representative.

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### **82<sup>nd</sup> AIRBORNE DEPLOYING THROUGH CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE**

**CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C.** – Elements of the Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., are deploying through Charleston Air Force Base during the next few weeks in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Charleston AFB C-17 Globemaster III aircraft and crews are picking up more than 2,000 members of the 82 AD at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., and flying them here where they have a layover before catching flights to their deployment location.

The extra uniformed personnel passing through Charleston AFB are giving base agencies another chance to support the mission in Iraq.

"Our lodging and fitness center folks are working around the clock to make sure our Army brethren have a warm and comfortable place to sleep while they're waiting for transportation," said Lt. Col. Tracy O'Grady, 437<sup>th</sup> Services Squadron commander.

"They're all being fed at the dining facility here, and we've extended our hours to make sure everyone gets a hot meal."

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O'Grady said more than 250 cots were erected at the fitness center. Video games, ping pong tables and other forms of entertainment are also in place to give the deploying soldiers something to do during their brief stay.

The lay over times vary depending on the availability of flights leaving Charleston AFB. Tracking flights and the personnel who get on them is the job of the 437<sup>th</sup> Aerial Port Squadron Traffic Management Flight.

"This is just normal operations for us," said Maj. John Pepin, 437 APS Operations Officer. "We're seeing some extra passengers, but it's nothing too huge.

Pepin said coordination between base agencies is the key to success when handling extra passengers.

"If (a departing aircraft) breaks, we have to coordinate with (437 SVS) and 437<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron," said Pepin. "We need to make sure the soldiers have a place to stay and are back here and ready to go when air travel becomes available.

"We're really supporting the war fighters who are going out there for a year or more, and we want to make sure we're taking care of their needs before they go," Pepin continued.

Army officials said the deployment through Charleston AFB, which started Jan. 7, should last about a month. Once complete, the 82 AD will have more than 12,000 soldiers on the ground in Iraq.